

## Remarks Following Discussions With Religious Leaders in Istanbul, Turkey *June 27, 2004*

All right. It has been my honor to welcome these very important leaders of different faiths to this dialog. They represent the very best of Turkey, which is a country that is secular in politics and strong in its faith. And we've had a wonderful discussion. I'm so honored that these leaders would take time and share their thoughts with me. And I welcome them, and I thank

them for being so faithful to the Almighty God.

Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:55 p.m. at the Hilton Istanbul. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Remarks Following Discussions With Secretary General Jakob Gijsbert “Jaap” de Hoop Scheffer of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and an Exchange With Reporters in Istanbul *June 27, 2004*

*President Bush.* This man is doing a great job, and we're proud to call him friend. He believes in freedom and peace. And I really appreciate what you've done, sir.

*Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer.* Thank you. It's a challenge, but NATO is worth it.

*President Bush.* It is worth it.

*Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer.* NATO is worth it, and the transatlantic relationship is worth it, more than just in words but all in deeds.

*President Bush.* Right. I was hoping to change the mission of NATO so it meets the threats of the 21st century, and we're going to work together to help make sure NATO is configured militarily to meet the threats of the 21st century as well. But you're the right man for the job, and we're honored you took it. I really appreciate working with you.

*Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer.* We're defending values, and values never

come out. And I think they should be defended every single day and every single hour. We see examples of that everywhere around that NATO is—it's about values, has always been about values, and it's still about values. But Turkey has changed. We have terrorism everywhere. There's fights everywhere, be it here in this city, be it in New York, Uzbekistan, Mombasa, Yemen, you name it. This Alliance has to participate in fighting it first and winning it.

*President Bush.* Thank you.

### *Kidnaping of Turks*

Q. Does the kidnaping of the Turks cast a pall over this meeting?

[*President Bush responded to the question by shaking his head to indicate no.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:04 p.m. at the Hilton Istanbul. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom in Istanbul

June 28, 2004

### *Transfer of Sovereignty in Iraq*

*President Bush.* Good afternoon. Earlier today, 15 months after the liberation of Iraq, and 2 days ahead of schedule, the world witnessed the arrival of a free and sovereign Iraqi Government. Iraqi officials informed us that they are ready to assume power, and Prime Minister Allawi believes that making this transition now is best for his country. After decades of brutal rule by a terror regime, the Iraqi people have their country back.

This is a day of great hope for Iraqis and a day that terrorist enemies hoped never to see. The terrorists are doing all they can to stop the rise of a free Iraq. But their bombs and attacks have not prevented Iraqi sovereignty, and they will not prevent Iraqi democracy. Iraqi sovereignty is a tribute to the will of the Iraqi people and the courage of Iraqi leaders.

This day also marks a proud moral achievement for members of our coalition. We pledged to end a dangerous regime, to free the oppressed, and to restore sovereignty. We have kept our word.

Fifteen months ago, Saddam's regime was an enemy of America and the civilized world. Today Iraq's Government is an ally of both. Fifteen months ago, Iraq was a state sponsor of terrorism. Today Iraq's leaders, with our support, are systematically fighting terrorists across their country. Fifteen months ago, we faced the threat of a dictator with a history of using weapons of mass destruction. Today the dictator is a threat to no one, from the cell he now occupies. Fifteen months ago, the regime in Baghdad was the most aggressive in the Middle East and a constant source of fear and alarm for Iraq's neighbors. Today Iraq threatens no other country, and its democratic progress will be an example to the

broader Middle East. Fifteen months ago, Iraq was ruled by a regime that brutalized and tortured its own people, murdered hundreds of thousands, and buried them in mass graves. Today Iraqis live under a Government that strives for justice, upholds the rule of law, and defends the dignity of every citizen.

Iraq today still has many challenges to overcome. We recognize that. But it is a world away from the tormented, exhausted, and isolated country we found last year. Now the transfer of sovereignty begins a new phase in Iraq's progress toward full democracy. Together with the Iraqi Government, we're moving forward on every element of our five-part plan for Iraqi self-government.

Iraq's interim government has gained broad international support and has been endorsed by the U.N. Security Council. The United States and our coalition partners are helping prepare Iraqis for the defense of their own country, and we appreciate NATO's decision to approve Prime Minister Allawi's request for assistance in training Iraqi security forces—in training the Iraqi security forces. We're helping Iraqis rebuild their country's infrastructure, and Iraq will move—continue moving toward free elections, with important assistance from the United Nations.

All this progress is being attacked by foreign terrorists and by thugs from the fallen regime. The terrorists know they face defeat unless they break the spirit and commitment of the civilized world. The civilized world will not be frightened or intimidated. And Iraq's new leaders have made their position clear: Prime Minister Allawi recently said that "The insurgents are trying to destroy our country, and we're not going to allow this."